Copyright © 1961 by
BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM
Los Angeles, California 90042, U.S.A.

All rights reserved under Universal, Berne, International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions.

Published in the United States of America by Builders of the Adytum and simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada by Ridout and Maybe, Toronto 1, Canada.

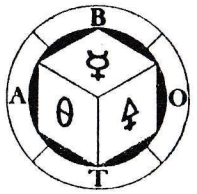
New and Revised Edition
Printed in the United States of America

Gifts, legacies and donations to B.O.T.A. are tax-deductible

This transcription is the sole property of Builders of the Adytum. It can never be sold, but is a privilege of membership.

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

LESSON NO. 36



BUILDERS OF THE ADYTUM

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Thirty-six

THE TOWER

THE LIGHTNING-FLASH in Key 16 is a reference to the words of THE BOOK OF FORMATION (1:5): "The appearance of the ten spheres out of nothing is like a flash of lightning, being without end. His word is in them when they emanate and when they return." Thus the lightning flash is a symbol of the power of the Creative Word. It properly corresponds to the letter Peh since the letter-name means the mouth as the organ of speech.

The flash comes from a solar disk. This shows that the active force at work is a phase of the operation of the Life-power in spite of the seeming destruction wrought by it. The disk is in the same corner of the picture as the sun in Key 0. Review what is said in Lesson 4 concerning this. Remember that the reproductive force is the Mars force which establishes another link with the attribution of the Planet Mars to Peh.

The lightning-flash diagrammatically designates the complete expression of the ten aspects of the Life-power mentioned in THE PATTERN ON THE TRESTLEBOARD. This symbolism is borrowed from a diagram familiar to Qabalists.

In relation to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment, the lightning indicates the sudden illumination, or flash of inspiration, which comes to us when we have faced our particular problem boldly and have concentrated on it by means of prolonged acts of attention, the full force of the Life-power.

Notice that the end of the thunderbolt is formed like an arrowhead, an ancient character for the letter Beth which is the alphabetical symbol of initiative and of the actual beginning of a cycle of activity corresponding to Key 1 of Tarot.

The tower is built of brick laid in twenty-two courses. It represents a structure of human speech because the components of speech are the letters of the alphabet which in Hebrew number twenty-two.

This tower is a structure of human error and ignorance, yet it is at the same time a House of God. Nothing is truer than that these physical personalities of ours, even though they be structures which incorporate our false notions, are at the same time temples of the living God. The ugliness and inadequacy of our bodies, their want of comeliness and grace, are caused by the influence on subconsciousness of our false thinking expressed by erroneous use of words.

TAROT FUNDAMENTALS

Lesson Thirty-six

THE TOWER

THE LIGHTNING-FLASH in Key 16 is a reference to the words of THE BOOK OF FORMATION (1:5): "The appearance of the ten spheres out of nothing is like a flash of lightning, being without end. His word is in them when they emanate and when they return." Thus the lightning flash is a symbol of the power of the Creative Word. It properly corresponds to the letter Peh since the letter-name means the mouth as the organ of speech.

The flash comes from a solar disk. This shows that the active force at work is a phase of the operation of the Life-power in spite of the seeming destruction wrought by it. The disk is in the same corner of the picture as the sun in Key 0. Review what is said in Lesson 4 concerning this. Remember that the reproductive force is the Mars force which establishes another link with the attribution of the Planet Mars to Peh.

The lightning-flash diagrammatically designates the complete expression of the ten aspects of the Life-power mentioned in THE PATTERN ON THE TRESTLEBOARD. This symbolism is borrowed from a diagram familiar to Qabalists.

In relation to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment, the lightning indicates the sudden illumination, or flash of inspiration, which comes to us when we have faced our particular problem boldly and have concentrated on it by means of prolonged acts of attention, the full force of the Life-power.

Notice that the end of the thunderbolt is formed like an arrowhead, an ancient character for the letter Beth which is the alphabetical symbol of initiative and of the actual beginning of a cycle of activity corresponding to Key 1 of Tarot.

The tower is built of brick laid in twenty-two courses. It represents a structure of human speech because the components of speech are the letters of the alphabet which in Hebrew number twenty-two.

This tower is a structure of human error and ignorance, yet it is at the same time a House of God. Nothing is truer than that these physical personalities of ours, even though they be structures which incorporate our false notions, are at the same time temples of the living God. The ugliness and inadequacy of our bodies, their want of comeliness and grace, are caused by the influence on subconsciousness of our false thinking expressed by erroneous use of words.

Hence the lightning-flash of true perception always makes itself felt in the physical body because there must be a period of physical readjustment before our bodies can be vehicles for the expression of the higher levels of consciousness.

The crown which is knocked off the top of the tower is a symbol of will-power because the Hebrew noun Kether, meaning "crown", is a synonym for "will". This, however, is a false crown, a symbol of mere usurpation, and its nature is exposed by the four letters M with which it is ornamented.

In Hebrew, M is Mem (מ), and the numeral value of Mem, 40, multiplied by 4, is 160. This is the number of the proper name קין, Cain. Cain, the first murderer, personifies the false idea of will-power . . . the notion that every person has a will of his own separate from the will-power of other persons and from the Cosmic Will which is the ruling power throughout the entire universe.

Right knowledge begins with a flash of perception which makes us realize that no detail of our personal experience can be separated from the total expression of the Life-power's activity. However brief this flash of realization may be, it overthrows the notion of a separate personal will, and it also disrupts mental structures based on the error that we are living our lives in perpetual antagonism to the universe and to the lives of our neighbors. This lie is behind every murder. It is eradicated by even the briefest perception of the fundamental unity of all that exists.

The falling figures represent the two modes of personal consciousness. The man is self-consciousness, the woman subconsciousness. The flash of inspiration upsets all our former conceptions of the nature of personal consciousness and reverses our former ways of thinking.

In Key 16 the figures are clothed because they hide their true nature from each other so long as man remains in the state of ignorant separateness. In this connection remember that clothes are symbols of shame and sin.

Twenty-two Yods are shown, suspended in air. Ten are on one side of the tower, so disposed that they form the Qabalistic diagram of the Tree of Life. The twelve on the other side are symmetrically arranged also. These Yods stand for the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet because every Hebrew letter is said to be some aspect of the letter Yod.

Thus these Yods floating in air represent the sum-total of cosmic forces. They stand, also, for the elements of the Creative Word and for the powers of human personality.

They are shown hanging in space to present symbolically the idea that none of these forces has a physical foundation. This idea is just the reverse of that suggested by the rocky, isolated peak on which the tower is erected. Note that this peak is the same color as the Devil's body.

The average person thinks his life has a physical basis. He supposes it to be sustained by food, air, water, and the various physical forces of his environment. Ageless Wisdom says just the opposite. It declares explicitly that the one Life-power is the basis of all manifestation whatsoever, physical or otherwise. It by no means denies the importance, much less the actual existence, of the physical plane; but it does say the physical world is an expression of the powers of spiritual life. Thus it declares that instead of life being supported by the conditions of physical manifestation, these conditions, per contra, are caused and maintained by life.

It is true that certain definite physical conditions must obtain in order that the functions of human personality may be exercised here on earth. It is not true that these conditions are either cause or support for such terrestrial functions of human personality. The true cause is the Life-power itself, and it is the Life-power which manifests itself in every physical condition, in every physical force. The conditions are the effects, not the causes, of manifestation.

Thus Ageless Wisdom holds causation to be vital, rather than physical. In our day, this conception of causation is not in fashion any more than the conception that the earth is round was in fashion in the days of Columbus. It is true, just the same. . . demonstrably true! Nor is it any less true because relatively few persons now living are able to make the demonstration.

Not every person can play a concerto. Only those who have sufficient musical talent and have devoted themselves to hours of practice can do so.

Similarly, there are persons on earth today who, because of long and intelligent practice, understand the laws of life and how to use them. Such people can control physical conditions in a way which appears miraculous to the rest of us.

Such virtuosi in the art of living have a command of their bodies, and, through those regenerated bodies, of their environment. This enables them to do many extraordinary things. Yet they all bear witness that at one stage of their development they were just as ignorant of the laws of life as are most persons today. They met the same problems we are meeting, and faced the same difficulties. At one time in their experience, they were as much in the dark as we seem to be. They supposed causation to be physical and they thought they were "going it alone". Like the tower, their house of personality was reared on a peak of selfish isolation from the rest of humanity and it was crowned by the usurper's diadem of belief in personal will.

Then there came a day when, like lightning, a flash of clear perception reversed their former opinions. Darkness closed round them again, for at this stage of spiritual unfoldment the light is not continuous. Yet they remembered what they had seen and the consequence of that recollection was a radical change in the fundamental conception on which their whole conduct of life was based.

We must make the same change, but we have to pass through the same experience. If you have had this experience, you will understand the deeper implications of Key 16. If you have not had it, this lesson will help prepare you for the sudden, terrible, yet wonderful awakening which will end your dream of separation and bring you near the beginning of the Way of Return.

In the directional attributions of the Hebrew letters, Peh is assigned to North. This is the place of greatest symbolic darkness. Thus Masonic lodges have no station in the North because it is said that the sun never shone on the north side of Solomon's Temple.

Compare this darkness symbolism with the color of the pillar on the left, or north side of Key 2 and with the color of the sphinx on the same side of Key 7. Note that the pillar marked with Beth is associated with the idea of strength and that in Hebrew, the word translated as "strength" may also be rendered as "severity" . . . suggested by the forbidding expression of the black sphinx in Key 7.

The idea behind this association of darkness and North with strength is the idea that those powers which are, to the average mind veiled in darkness, are the powers which bring release and enlightenment. The occult forces are liberating forces. What inspires fear and terror in the mind of a savage is what a civilized man employs to set himself free from a thousand limitations which restrict the aborigine.

Nothing in nature inspires man with greater fear than lightning. Yet civilized man annihilates distance by telephone, telegraph and wireless. By this willing servant of human intelligence he sends words and pictures round the world. In hours he makes journeys that took days and months only a few years ago, and the lightning-flash in a gas-engine makes this possible.

This is why the Emperor faces north. Human reasoning is always concerned with the unknown, with what is concealed from the average mind. He who conquers his fear of darkness is able to discover the secrets it hides and to bring them and himself to light.

In Job 37:22 we read, "Fair weather cometh from the north", but the margin of the King James Version substitutes "gold" for "fair weather", and this is the more accurate translation. In Hebrew, it reads מצפון זהב יאתה, and the numeral value of this phrase is 696, which is the number of אש השמים, "Esh ha-shamaim," "Fire of heaven". This last is the same as one French title for Key 16, "Le Feu de Ciel".

This passage from Job is the text for a long alchemical commentary in the Qabalistic BOOK OF PURIFYING FIRE, but discussion of this must be reserved for our texts on Hermetic Science. Suffice it for now that here is rather more than a hint that by "Mars" and by "North" wise men of old indicated their knowledge of the same force now named electricity.

What is more, they knew that the occult force they symbolized by a flash of lightning is the basis for those inner modifications of the personal vehicle which result in enlightenment. This aspect of the cosmic vital electricity they represented also by a serpent. Hence, in Key 6 there is a serpent on the north side of the picture, and in Key 10 a serpent is descending on the north side of the wheel.

Thus we may interpret "Gold cometh from the north" as meaning "Enlightenment has its origin in the hidden sources of power which terrify the minds of the ignorant."

Remembering that a fundamental activity of the Mars force in human personality is the stimulation of desire, devote yourself this week to a study of your desires. Many of them are unimportant, weak, ephemeral.

An enlightened man is a man of few desires, but those he has are deep, powerful, one-pointed. Such a man shoots straight at his mark permitting nothing to deflect his aim. His thoughts dwell on what he has decided to be and do. His mind pictures it clearly. His activity is directed to its attainment.

Select your most important desire. Do not allow less important ones to interfere with it. Yielding to the influence of small desires dissipates energy you should apply to truly important work.

This practice is difficult, easy as it is to describe. To bring the desire nature completely under control takes long, steady drill. On this account, do not drop your practice at the end of this week. Keep at it continually. Desire is the power that achieves, and the art of directing this power is the basis of all kinds of mastery.

"Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust."—Isaiah 26:19

Have you ever had a nightmare? A dream so terrible that you have never forgotten it? Terror following terror; dread unspeakable; futile endeavors to escape, that were continually frustrated? Or perhaps a dream of falling from a great height, ended by a sudden start as you came wide awake?

It takes a bad dream to wake you up. When the terror becomes too great, the misery too hard to bear, the danger so threatening that you simply can't stand it, then your eyes fly open and you heave a sigh of relief.

So it is with all who "dwell in dust." Read the passage in Isaiah of which our quotation is part, and there you will find a tale of all human miseries. The "dust" is the same "dust of the ground" of which Adam was formed, according to the allegory in Genesis. To dwell in dust is to be hypnotized by the dream of physical causation—and sooner or later the dream turns into a nightmare. Yet the nightmare itself awakens us. So long as appearances are pleasant, we

are content to dream on. While the Prodigal's cash held out, and he had the wherewith to spend in riotous living, he was "away from himself", caught in the delusion of identification with things outside.

So long as we ascribe power, wisdom, supply, or anything else of worth to external conditions, just so long are we dreaming. The sources of life and power are within us. Human personality is like a projection machine. Human environment is like a screen. Our mental imagery (inside us) makes the pictures, and the words of our mouths incite the reactions we experience. But the light which projects the pictures is an inner light . . the light of the One Self.

When we awake we come to ourselves as did the Prodigal. We stop dreaming. We are freed from the nightmare terrors besetting those who dwell in dust. Then we find the Creative Word in our mouths and in our hearts. We learn that our "speech", that is, our mental definitions of ourselves and of our relations to circumstances, never return to us void. If our definitions be wrong, because we are deluded by appearances, the appearances grow worse and worse. When we awake and come to ourselves, a new set of pictures is projected on the screen of our environment.

Thousands have demonstrated this truth. They have come home to the Father, and in His house there is feasting and song and new raiment. They speak a pure language. Little by little the nightmare fades away from their minds. To the uninitiated, they seem to be lucky, but they themselves know that their secret of power is the continual **practice** of the presence of the only God there is, the One Power seated in the heart of man.

I am the mouth whence issueth the breath of Life;
I am the all-devouring one
Whereunto all things return.

"Beginning and End"
Is my holy name,
For the MOUTH is a sign of my self-duplication,
Whereby I testify to myself of myself.

I am the Word of Life
which exciteth all beginnings,
The Word
Which hath its own beginning in Victory
And its completion in Splendor,
And its balance between them.

From THE BOOK OF TOKENS
by Dr. Paul Foster Case